

July 16, 1965

**NORTH VIET NAM****The Jungle Marxist**

(See Cover)

High over the Red River delta, U.S. jets raced toward their targets: bridges and ammunition dumps, barracks and railroad lines. Below, the country spread like oozing clay, its paddies framed by the dark brown lines of dikes. Ahead loomed the forested mountain peaks crowned with billowing thunderheads. Then there was Hanoi: a net of tiny roads leading in, the rail line gleaming north toward China, the factories on the river's edge belching smoke, the concrete revetments of Phuc Yen airfield, behind which lurked North Viet Nam's MIGs. As the American jets flew high overhead, bypassing the capital for other targets, the enemy below was waiting.

Upstream from Hanoi's abattoirs, sentries manned the guns atop the Pont Doumer, a spidery span built by the same engineers who erected the Eiffel Tower. From their perch, they could see other batteries: 37-mm. cannon, machine guns, hand-held automatic rifles—all poking skyward from the taller buildings of the capital. In the streets below, grim-faced boys snapped through the manual of arms with wooden rifles while pretty girls in pantaloons hurled mock grenades through automobile tires, many of them scoring two hits out of three over 25 yds. Beyond the city, crews of workers put the last touches on more sophisticated armaments: the launch pads of Soviet-supplied SAM II antiaircraft missile sites.

The Men from Uncle. Hanoi last week was ready for total war. So was Ho Chi Minh, the goat-bearded god of Vietnamese Communism and, at 75, Asia's oldest, canniest Red leader. North Viet Nam's Ho was making his last and most steely stand, and his young country seemed ready to win or die with him. Since February, U.S. air strikes into North Viet Nam have pounded Ho steadily: in more than 4,050 sorties, jets and prop bombers have razed at least 30 military bases, knocked out 127 anti-aircraft batteries, shattered 34 bridges. In their wake the planes left ablaze 17 destroyed truck convoys and an equal number of weapons-carrying trains, along with 20 radar stations, 33 naval craft and the entire Dong Hoi airbase. Yet even as the bomb line crumpled closer to crowded Hanoi, there was no sign of Ho's flinching.

"We've asked the other side on more than one occasion what else would stop if we stopped bombing," said U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk last week. "Are you going to stop attacking these villages and killing off thousands of innocent civilians? What else will stop? And we've never had any reply." Even the intentional five-day lull in U.S. bombing last May failed to draw a re-

sponse from intransigent North Viet Nam. Britain's Commonwealth peace mission has not got very far either. Last week, after pondering Hanoi's rebuff of the mission, Harold Wilson gamely sent a low-level British official off to Hanoi on a "private" visit, apparently hoping to get Ho to change his mind. Few held out hope that Ho would do so.

What makes kindly old "Uncle Ho" so hard-nosed? What is it that sends the men from Uncle (some 6,000 or more this year alone) southward as insurgents against an enemy that could crush Hanoi in an instant? More than anything, it is a sense of confidence in methods that have worked splendidly in the past. Ho, after all, has been riding a winning streak for 20 years. Through wile and determination, he aided in evicting the Japanese in 1945, then got the French to throw out the Chinese Nationalists in 1946, finally ejecting the French themselves in 1954. He now believes that the same techniques will work against the U.S.—not only in South Viet Nam but in all of Southeast Asia.

The Bellicose Ones. Ho's heady resolve is fed by three powerful forces.

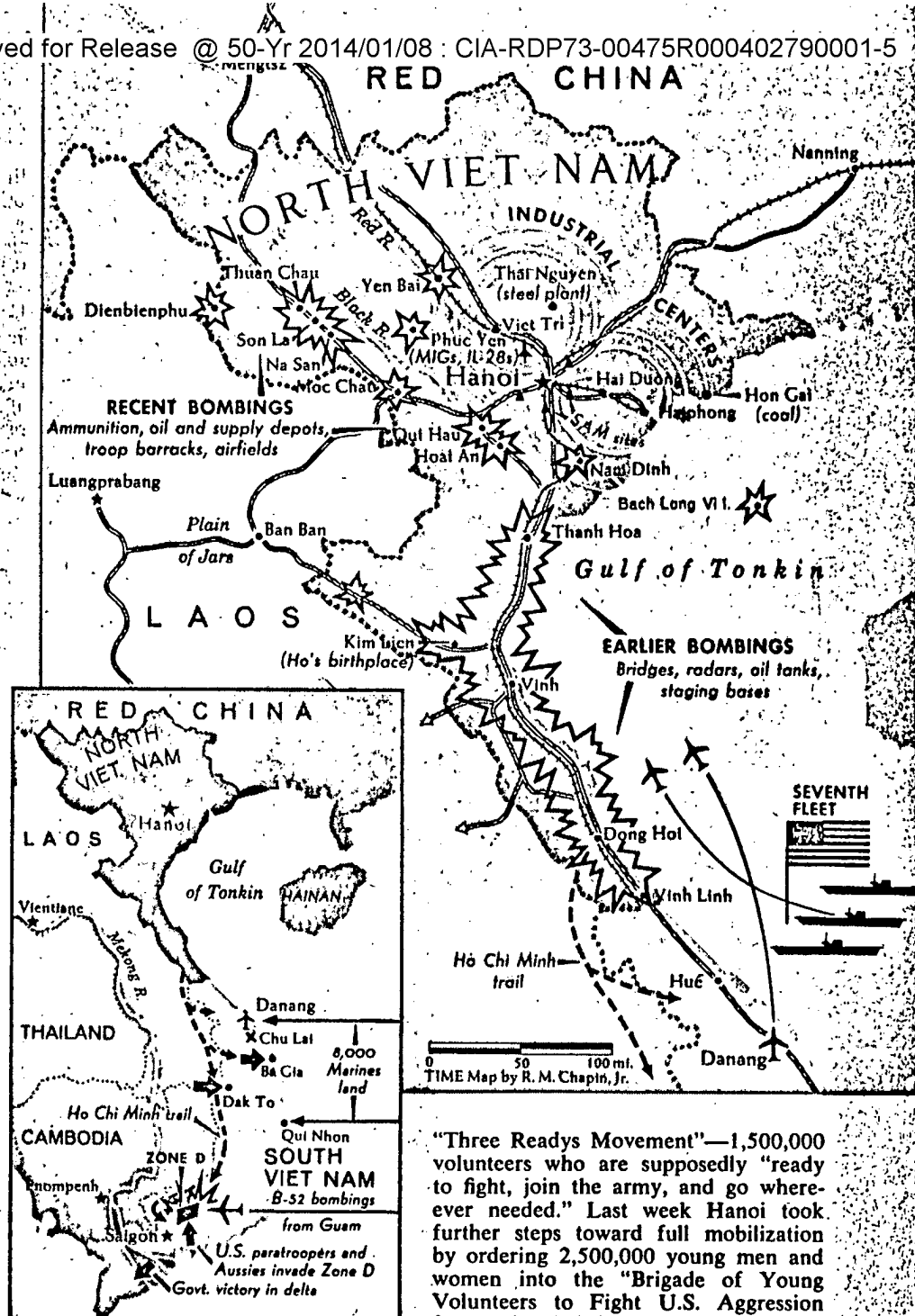
First comes covetousness: North Viet Nam hungers for the rice of the South and the rich alluvial delta of the Mekong River. Though Ho and other Hanoi leaders speak mistily about the "reunification of the great Vietnamese people" as if it were some grand historical mission, they actually have contempt for their southerly brothers, whom they accuse of being afflicted with a "Côte d'Azur" mentality.

Second among Ho's drives: Communist ideology. At this stage of development, the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam craves victory in a "war of national liberation." Once South Viet Nam fell, Ho could turn his attention to extending Vietnamese control over Cambodia, Thailand and Laos. As one historian observes, "The Vietnamese have contributed very little to Asian culture, and quite a bit of its violence."

Third comes Ho's fear of his Communist allies: only a reunified Viet Nam, he believes, can maintain its entity in the shadow of Red China. More than 1,000 years of Vietnamese history were spent under direct Chinese domination, and most of the rest was devoted to fighting the Chinese off. Indeed, the very name Viet Nam in Chinese means "cross over to the south."

With those forces driving him, Ho is determined to fight and win. "We held off the French for eight years," he told Historian Bernard Fall in 1962. "We can hold off the Americans for at least as long. Americans don't like long, inconclusive wars. This is going to be a long, inconclusive war."

The Three Readys. Ho's confidence is reflected by his top soldier, stocky, slab-cheeked Defense Minister Vo Nguyen Giap, 53, the victor of Dienbienphu. "South Viet Nam is the example for national-liberation movements of our times," boasts Giap. "If



"Three Readys Movement"—1,500,000 volunteers who are supposedly "ready to fight, join the army, and go wherever needed." Last week Hanoi took further steps toward full mobilization by ordering 2,500,000 young men and women into the "Brigade of Young Volunteers to Fight U.S. Aggression for National Salvation." As bulky in numbers as it is in name, the brigade will work in fields and factories vacated by militiamen.

While North Viet Nam is thus strong in men and motivation, it is weak in the critical area of modern weaponry. Giap's air force is still minuscule, though Soviet contributions of obsolescent aircraft (MIGs and medium-range IL-28 bombers) have doubled it in the past four months to 60 planes. Now and then audacity can overcome obsolescence, as it did last March, when three MIGs took on a flight of U.S. jets twice their speed and bagged a brace. Last week the technological superiority of American planes and weapons asserted itself: missile-armed Phantoms flying combat air patrol 40 miles south of Hanoi nailed a pair of audacious MIGs, sent them flaming to the

it proves possible to defeat the special warfare tested in South Viet Nam by the American imperialists, this will mean that it can be defeated everywhere." There is a special kind of brute power behind Giap's rhetoric. From the 34-man platoon he formed in 1944 has mushroomed a "People's Army" of at least 450,000 regulars—tough *bo doi* (G.I.s) as fanatical as fighters anywhere in the world. French prisoners led out of Dienbienphu eleven years ago were told to walk on the Communist bodies littering the fields to avoid mines and barbed wire, and some of the steppingstones were still alive.

Behind Giap's regulars stand fully half a million militiamen, trained and armed (though often with ancient fowling pieces), bolstered by the

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deck. The run-in proved again that Giap's airmen would face disaster if they came up in force; and Giap's navy has practically disappeared after four months of U.S. air attack.

Beneath the Chimera. For Ho, the confrontation with the U.S. over South Viet Nam is the crowning act of a long life dedicated to subversion. His personal Ho Chi Minh trail has led him through the widest range of revolutionary activity experienced by any living Red leader. En route, he shed identities like snakeskins, metamorphosing from cabin boy to pastry cook, from poet to guerrilla leader, from Parisian photo retoucher to pseudo-Buddhist monk. His name-changes alone would fill an address book (some 20 have been pinned down, ranging from Nguyen "the Victorious" to "Old Chap"

of the struggle, I came to understand that only Communism could free the oppressed peoples and workers of the world from the yoke of slavery." In Paris just after World War I, Ho hung out in the *caves*, palled around with a Chinese student named Chou En-lai, wrote pamphlets for the Communist International denouncing the "ugly mug of capitalism," edited a strident, anti-colonial weekly called *Le Paria* (The Untouchable), wrote a bitter, anti-French comedy called *Le Dragon de Bambou*. In 1918 he rented a suit and trotted out to Versailles to badger Woodrow Wilson for the "liberation" of "Viet Nam"—the ancient name for the region that all Frenchmen divided into *partes tres*: Tonkin China, Annam and Cochinchina. His pleas were lost in the shuffle of more immediate his-

who claims most of the credit for "wars of national liberation"—was a budding subversive in China.

Teacher's Pet. Giving up the soft life of a Moscow student, with its "party spouses" and anticapitalist polemics, Ho set out for China under the name of Nguyen Ai Quoc (roughly, "Smith the Patriot"), as agitator and translator for Stalin's agent Mikhail Borodin. Their mission: to penetrate the Kuomintang and train Communist *cán bộ* (cadres) to infiltrate French Indo-China. At Canton's Whampoa Military Academy, Ho demonstrated his skills as a disciplinarian. Any student-agitator who failed to show sufficient diligence was promptly betrayed to the French when he infiltrated Viet Nam. Most of Ho's pupils quickly learned to do their homework, but teacher's pet was the son of an Indo-Chinese Cabinet chief, a lad named Pham Van Dong, who today serves as Ho's Premier.

Ho's academic career ended abruptly in 1927, when Chiang Kai-shek turned on the Chinese Communists and drove them underground. Ho's hegira took him back and forth between Moscow and China for the next 13 years, forming new parties, resting in British or Chinese jails, organizing hunger strikes, taking a concubine who later bore him a daughter, and writing inspirational poetry when nothing more inspiring could be done.

Sample inspiration:

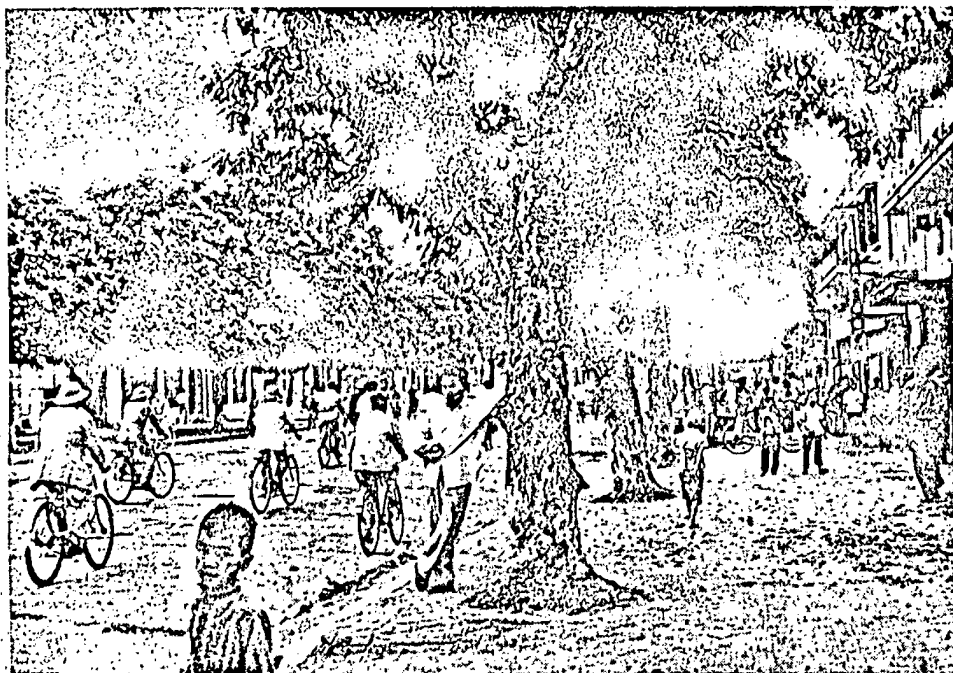
*I am an honest man and my soul is at peace:*

*I am suspected of being a shadowy Chinese!*

*The ways of life are always dangerous, But living is now less than very easy.*

Planted Seeds. In 1940, for the first time in 28 years, Ho returned to his native Viet Nam. Operating from the mountainous caves of Cao Bang province (where he dutifully dubbed a streamlet "Lenin Spring"), Ho planted the seeds of the Viet Minh—the underground outfit that would carry him to power. During the five-year Japanese occupation of World War II, he carefully nursed alliances with the Chinese Communists, the Kuomintang and the American OSS, receiving some aid from all three. His steady aim: to strengthen the Viet Minh and one day kick out the French.

His guerrillas, led by a tough young trooper named Vo Nguyen Giap, harassed the Japanese and perfected the tactics of jungle Marxism. When 200,000 Chinese Nationalist troops marched into Viet Nam with French approval at war's end, Giap's guerrillas were ready to continue the struggle. But Ho typically preferred the more subtle tactic of turning ally against ally, and promptly sought to persuade the French to oust the Chinese again. Ho knew that France would be an easier adversary to deal with. Besides, there was the age-old hatred and fear of the Chinese. As Ho told his "United Front" allies who urged cooperation with the



RUSH HOUR IN HANOI  
*Sad sounds from the birds.*

Wang). But beneath the chimeric legend lies a purposeful, pragmatic Communist whose aim is the conquest of all Southeast Asia.

A Vietnamese saying has it that "a man born in Nghe An province will oppose anything." That is where Ho was born, in 1890, when France dominated Indo-China—much to the disgust of Ho's father, a scholarly colonial employee who was fired by the French for his "patriotic" activities. After schooling in Hué and Saigon, Ho (then known as Nguyen Tat Thanh) headed for Europe in 1912 as a cabin boy on a French steamer. After a brief apprenticeship at London's Carlton Hotel under the famed chef Escoffier, Ho drifted on to Paris.

The Ugly Mug. There he fell for the Red recipe. "At first it was my patriotism and not Communism that drew me to Lenin and the Third International," he explained years later on his 70th birthday. "Step by step along the path

tory, and he never got to see Wilson. But the farsighted Bolsheviks in Moscow saw promise in the skinny, ardent Annamite.

In 1924, after an intensive course in subversive techniques at Moscow's University of the Toilers of the East (during which he established the beginnings of a close friendship with Stalin), Ho struck the theme that would resound throughout his career. Addressing the Fifth Comintern Congress that summer, he took European Communists to task for failing to appreciate the potential for revolution in underdeveloped areas. "You will forgive my frankness," he said, "but I cannot avoid explaining that the speeches of my comrades from the mother countries have given me the impression that they are trying to kill a snake by stepping on its tail. For you all know that the venom and the energy of the capitalist snake is concentrated more in the colonies than in the mother countries."

merde for five years than smell the Chinese variety for the rest of my life."

In 1946, Ho headed for Paris to negotiate Chinese withdrawal with the government of Premier Georges Bidault, and also to win full independence for his Viet Minh regime. All charm and chatter, Ho reigned in style at the Royal Hotel near the Etoile. "He would always embrace us affectionately," recalls one participant in the negotiations. "But Bidault wasn't too keen on such gestures, presumably because of Ho's goatee." After two months of hirsute haggling, Ho suddenly agreed to a *modus vivendi*: the Chinese would leave Viet Nam, but there would be no independence. France promised only to explore the possibilities. That was hardly what Ho wanted, and no sooner was the ink dry on the agreement than Giap's army took to the hills to begin the eight-year guerrilla war that cul-

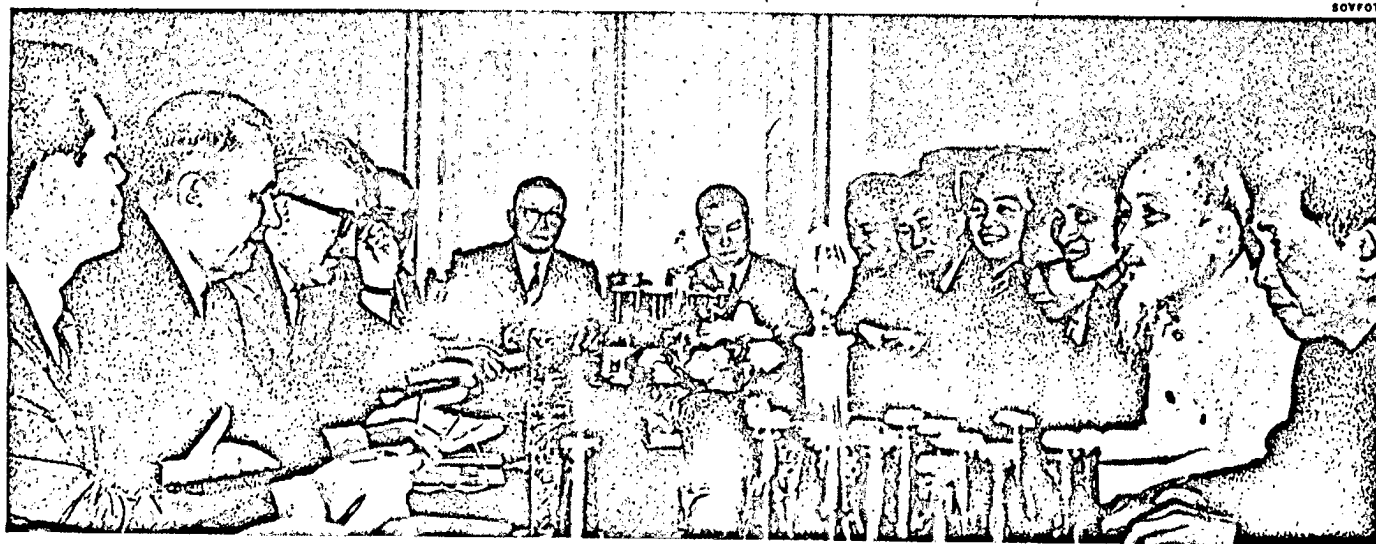
once when Chou En-lai spoke in Hanoi, Ho sat on the stage beside the speaker, subtly aping Chou's every gesture and facial twitch, much to the audience's amusement—and Chou's puzzlement. As a carryover from his days of flight and subversion, he favors disguises, fooling even such close friends as Giap by merely rolling up his trousers to look like a country yokel.

As President, Ho pulls down a salary of \$840 a year—nearly ten times the annual income of the average Vietnamese. He lives in a thatch-roofed house on the palace grounds of the former French Governor General, dresses simply in cream-colored, mandarin-style uniforms, and "Ho Chi Minh sandals" carved from automobile tires. For all the simple surface, his tastes are exquisite; he smokes American cigarettes (Philip Morris and Camels), and his favorite food is a rare delicacy

lowland Vietnamese up into the mountains behind Hanoi in the hope of developing new agricultural land, but the million who have been forcibly moved complain of ghosts and malaria. This year North Viet Nam will fall 2,500,000 tons short of its programmed rice-production level, forcing the people to eat corn, millet and manioc—hardly favorites of the Asian palate.

Rise & Shine. Rationing prevails everywhere, and Hanoi residents are permitted only 5½ yds. of cotton cloth per year. Once girls in elegant silk *ao dais* strolled the shaded boulevards; their modern counterparts scrub the streets clad in floppy brown pajamas and gauze face masks. The only bar in town is in the former Metropole Hotel (now the Reunification), and it caters only to foreigners.

Since the U.S. bombing raids began last February, Hanoi's working routine



KOSYGIN (SECOND FROM LEFT) IN HANOI WITH HO, 1965\*  
In an ideological struggle, a lively interest in both sides of the street.

minated with Dienbienphu and the complete exhaustion of the French will to resist. In 1954, with the signing of the Geneva Accords, North Viet Nam became Ho's fief.

The Grandchildren. During his eleven-year reign, Ho has generated a remarkable image among his 18 million subjects. "He is everywhere," rhapsodize his court poets. "He is at once our father, uncle and older brother. He is the heart that feeds a hundred arteries." He is also the man whose three-year land-reform program (1954-56) ruthlessly eradicated perhaps as many as 100,000 peasants. Still the survivors love him. More than 400,000 Vietnamese children bear the title "Uncle Ho's Grandchildren," a reward proffered only to the best students of Vietnamese Communism.

At 75, Ho seems to be in remarkable health. Recent visitors to his presidential office—fully 20 *tatami* mats (360 sq. ft.) in area, as one Japanese describes it, and topped by a huge, sonorous fan—have found Ho ruddy-cheeked and cheerful. For a Communist

called "swallow's nest"—a meringue of sea algae and swallow's saliva.

No such luxuries are available to the average North Vietnamese. Hanoi, once a comfortable colonial city, has fallen victim to the Marxist-Leninist muteness typical of Communist capitals. Its streets are virtually empty of automobiles. Instead fleets of bicycles hiss through town, pedaled silently by a silent people. "You hear the shuffle of feet," says a recent visitor, "but no squabbling of merchants, no squeals, no laughter. They don't even seem to talk to one another. You can hear the birds singing in downtown Hanoi at midday. It is strangely saddening."

Ghosts & Malaria. Things are even worse in the countryside, where most of North Viet Nam's populace makes a living. Hanoi (pop. 650,000) and Haiphong (pop. 375,000) are the only big cities in a country the size of Missouri. In the Red River delta, where 80% of the population nonetheless try to live, breathe, and grow enough food to eat, population density is 2,000 people per sq. mi. and growing at 3% a

has been rudely disrupted. Citizens now rise at 5 a.m., perform calisthenics in the streets under the watchful eye of the local *can bo*, then go off to work until 9:30 a.m. Since Ho & Co. fear midday air raids, the workers do not get back to the job until 3 p.m., then stay on until 9:30 p.m. On Sundays "volunteers" wheel out of town to work on the dikes of the Red River delta. "Some go because they feel legitimately patriotic," explains a visitor. "Others go because to them it's a day in the country. And others go because they're afraid not to."

Evidence of war readiness abounds: barbed wire festoons the pink and yellow fronts of government office buildings; militiamen stalk the streets with fixed bayonets and grenades at their belts; as part of the effort to deceive U.S. pilots, bicycle handlebars and wheel rims are painted camouflage green, and farmers wear banana

\* At Ho's right: Premier Pham Van Dong; fifth from right: Defense Minister Vo Nguyen Giap.





HANOI "VOLUNTEERS" BUILDING A PARK  
A day in the country—or else.

branches in their hats. Even pigs on the way to market are artfully shrouded in leaf-bedecked nets. Reportedly, more than 300,000 women and children have been evacuated from Hanoi in preparation for aerial attack, but after seeing the bombed-out bridges downcountry, many have filtered back into Hanoi, which they regard as a sanctuary.

**Tempting Targets.** Indeed, much of North Viet Nam remains a sanctuary from American bombs. From February through mid-June, U.S. Air Force and Navy fighter-bombers concentrated their attacks on the narrow, unpopulated strip of coastline between the 17th parallel and Thanh Hoa (see map). There the targets were strictly military—radar stations, staging areas, roads, bridges and naval vessels, and all were below the so-called "Hanoi line." Then on June 22, jets crossed the line, began pounding the mountainous bulge of country north and west of Hanoi, slamming tons of bombs and rockets into targets near such towns as Son La, Thuan Chau and even Dienbienphu. Though U.S. raiders struck to within 40 miles of the capital, it was clear to Ho that the U.S. was purposely sparing his population and industrial centers.

To many U.S. strategists, these are the most tempting targets available. They include the Thai Nguyen pig-iron plant 50 miles north of Hanoi, the super-phosphate plant at Lam Tao, the chemical works at Viet Tri—all built within the past decade through Russian and Chinese aid. Also appealing: the Hon Gai coal mines, Haiphong's port and petroleum facilities and the military airbases on which recline Ho's recently acquired MIGs.

**Back to the Hills?** Why hasn't the U.S. bombed these targets? First, in Washington's view, the bombing of

what it calls "property targets" would result in the killing of North Vietnamese civilians, thus provoking clamorous concern both domestically and internationally and reviving Asia's lingering "Hiroshima resentment," centering on the image of white men bombing Asians. This view holds that destruction of Ho's puny industrial base (87% of the country depends on agriculture for a living) would hardly be worth it.

The second danger that the U.S. sees in bombing closer to Hanoi is that some Russians might be killed. That danger became a greater probability last week when U.S. intelligence sources reported that there were five surface-to-air missile sites going up around Hanoi. The SAM sites describe a nearly complete circle around the capital, and may well be manned by Soviet technicians. The birds themselves—perhaps six to a site—are the same that brought down an American U-2 over Cuba in 1962. They can pluck a plane from the sky at an altitude of 80,000 ft. and fully 35 miles away, riding a radar beam en route and destroying the aircraft with a proximity-fused high explosive or even a nuclear blast. Even after the rockets are mounted, U.S. pilots could take them out by sneaking in beneath the line-of-sight alert radars and slamming the concrete revetments that house the missiles with their own standoff air-to-ground birds.

In addition to the SAMs, the Russians have provided a lot of verbal bluster, but total Russian aid to North Viet Nam has been only \$365 million (mostly in food-processing plants, electric-power development, mining and chemical equipment). Soviet Premier Aleksei Kosygin's visit to Hanoi last February was aimed at re-establishing Russian influence in Southeast Asia, but with the intensification of the war, Russia has lost much of its enthusiasm. Peking is still the big spender, having provided \$650 million in economic aid. Though Ho at first responded to the Chinese largesse by mimicking Mao with Orwellian hate campaigns, kangaroo courts and rapid, brutal collectivization, he has also tried to remain aloof from the Moscow-Peking ideological quarrel. Essentially, it is in the North Vietnamese interest to work both sides of the street. And basically it is in Washington's interest to keep Ho astraddle, while at the same time doing nothing that might drive Russia and Red China together. Bombing the SAM sites might well shatter that policy.

**Claims & Columnists.** On the other hand, President Johnson sees no reason to cease the tactical bombings of North Viet Nam. By keeping the pressure on Hanoi's communication and transportation lines, the U.S. will make infiltration of the South progressively more difficult. Already the North Vietnamese have been forced to rebuild their bridges at water level with crossbeams, then under cover of darkness slide boards across to span the rivers. "Sure," says one Air Force officer, "they can

slip their supplies through on sampans and rebuild their bridges by night, but for every hole in the road they will need a few more men, a few more trucks to replace those we shoot up. And they don't have unlimited resources."

For all the *esprit* of Hanoi's Communist cadres, North Vietnamese morale has slipped since the bombings began. Says British Orientalist P. J. Honey: "They are holding constant indoctrination courses to intensify the people's hatred of the 'imperialist' Americans, which they never had to do against the French. The way they keep up spirits is to claim they have shot down hundreds of American planes. But the planes keep coming over in increasing numbers, which must make the North Vietnamese peasant wonder."

Perhaps as a result, Premier Pham Van Dong has recently begun warning that the war might take another five to ten years, and Hanoi's three dailies take up great swatches of space reporting U.S. "teach-ins" and predicting the ultimate rejection of the war by the American people. As Honey says: "Reading the Hanoi papers, you would think that the only Senator in the U.S. is Wayne Morse and the only columnist Walter Lippmann. They offer all this as proof that their cause will succeed."

**The Grinding Bind.** At the same time, Ho is experiencing ever greater factionalism within his own Lao Dong Party. Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh and Party Secretary Le Duan tug toward Peking, while Defense Minister Giap and Premier Pham Van Dong lean toward Moscow. This leads many observers to wonder if Ho has real control over his country. Actually, Ho is too supple to be drawn into murderous internecine party battle. He remains above the raging policy debates; then when the contestants are weary and the options laid out, he tips the scales with his own view.

An oft-heard argument is that Ho should be left alone to reunify Viet Nam, since he would doubtless emerge as the Tito of Southeast Asia and hence become a man who could be dealt with reasonably by the West. This is wishful thinking. Ho does not have the 1,100 miles of buffer zone separating him from Red China that Tito had from Russia; nor has Peking's attitude toward North Viet Nam relaxed as Moscow's did toward Yugoslavia before the 1948 break. And when Tito broke clear, he had a unified nation under him, plus all of Western Europe to turn to for economic aid and military assistance.

For all his experience and agility, Ho is now caught in a grinding bind. Neither Moscow nor Peking will put up with him as a purely Vietnamese patriot; each wants him in its camp. The West cannot countenance his Communist expansionism for fear that it will eventually inundate the rest of Southeast Asia. It will take a lot more than his guile and staying power to emerge a victor in Southeast Asia.